

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

**STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF May 28-29, 2015**

Prepared on April 17, 2015

**ITEM NUMBER: 6**

**Drought Conditions Update by Regional Liaison to Water Rights  
Division**

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**KEY INFORMATION:**

Location: Region-Wide  
Type of Activities: Permitting, Interagency Coordination, Technical Assistance, Grant and Loan Funding, Stakeholder Involvement

**THIS ACTION: Board Discussion/Information/Direction**

**DISCUSSION**

Central Coast Water Board staff has seen a decline in specific tasks related to water rights, as the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) staff has responded to the water rights and drinking water issues presented by the on-going drought conditions in the state. However, some drought-related tasks continue to emerge in the region through permitting, groundwater and spill cleanup and investigations, interagency coordination (since we regulate municipalities for wastewater discharges who also provide water supply), and grant-funding outreach. Staff remains flexible and available to facilitate or implement drought-related tasks regionally or to assist State Water Board staff as tasks emerge.

Staff continues to track and facilitate drought assistance and water supply improvement in critical areas. See the specific area information in the subsequent section of this report.

**State-wide Drought Information and Activities**

State Water Board Drought Updates

On April 1, 2015 the Governor issued an executive order (B-29-15) requiring the State Water Board to impose restrictions to achieve a statewide 25% reduction in potable urban water usage, relative to the amounts used in 2013. Additionally, the order charged the State Water Board to:

- impose restrictions on water use for commercial, industrial, and institutional properties;
- prohibit irrigation with potable water of ornamental turf on public street medians and outside newly constructed homes and buildings unless delivered by drip or microspray systems;
- direct urban water suppliers to develop rate structures and other pricing mechanisms to maximize water conservation; and

- require urban water suppliers to provide monthly information on water usage, conservation and enforcement.

Additionally, the order required the State Water Board to increase enforcement against water waste through additional reporting of water use, conservation, and diversion, and water right inspections.

The order also requested the California Public Utilities Commission to impose similar restrictions and rate structure/pricing mechanisms for investor-owned utilities providing water services. The Department of Water Resources is required to lead a statewide initiative in partnership with local agencies to collectively replace 50 million square feet of lawns and ornamental turf with drought tolerant landscapes, update the State Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance and require agricultural water suppliers to include a drought management plan that describes actions and quantification of water supplies and demands in Agricultural Water Management Plans. The Executive Order also includes requirements to invest in new technologies and to streamline government response related to provisions and protection of water.

The State Water Board completed or plans to complete the following to comply with the Executive Order.

- April 7- Notice announcing release of draft regulatory framework and request for public comment;
- April 17- Notice announcing release of draft regulations for informal public comment;
- April 28- Emergency rulemaking formal notice;
- May 5 or 6- Board hearing and adoption

The Executive Order and other information associated with the development of the conservation regulations can be reviewed at the State Water Board Drought Year Water Actions webpage at: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water\\_issues/programs/drought/emergency\\_mandatory\\_regulations.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/emergency_mandatory_regulations.shtml)

On April 2, 2015, the State Water Board Executive Director announced that the Water Board is planning to curtail water rights for surface water diversions in key watersheds.

## **Central Coast Water Board General Activities Related to Drought**

### Drought-Related Complaints

Central Coast Water Board staff continues to refer people with complaints related to water use and diversions to the State Water Board's Water Rights Enforcement webpage and the complaint form:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water\\_issues/programs/enforcement/complaints/index.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/enforcement/complaints/index.shtml)

The State Water Board is giving highest priority to these types of complaints when they are in critical watersheds that have had water rights curtailed due to drought conditions or in watersheds that have resident endangered species.

Since the last Water Board Meeting and Drought Update Report, Central Coast Water Board received the following complaints: 1) irrigated agricultural operations are indicating that water shortage is the reason for termination on notices of termination for enrollment in the agricultural order, and 2) report of irrigation runoff and unrestricted pumping from a private well that irrigates

a golf course adjacent to water district boundaries that also rely on groundwater, presumably pumping from the same aquifer, 3) citizen concerned about the City of Atascadero pumping water out of a creek that recharges the groundwater where drinking water extracted, or directly out of a groundwater well, in order to fill Atascadero Lake for aesthetic reasons (and which evaporates), 4) a housing community on the Monterey Peninsula requiring maintenance of large lawns, 5) citizen concern that communities can continue to build houses even though water is limited and urban conservation requirements exist.

### **Central Coast Water Board Activities Related to Communities with Critical Water Supply Conditions**

#### Monterey County

Water Board staff is tracking development of water sources in Monterey County. The Monterey County Water Resources Agency, the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency, the city of Salinas and the Marina Coast Water District, continue to pursue water sources for expanding the recycled water supply. Agreements to date consider tapping Peninsula wastewater and storm runoff, and Salinas-area produce wash water and contaminated runoff to help meet regional water needs. Some water would be steered to a project known as Pure Water Monterey, in which treated water would be pumped into and stored in a Seaside aquifer, joining with California American Water's desalination plant as part of the Peninsula water supply project, which is designed to help replace state-mandated pumping reductions from the Carmel River. The deal would also provide additional irrigation water for the existing Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project, water reclamation project.

Local news outlets continue to report on both obstacles and progress on these projects, such as a request to the State Board for a relaxation of the state-mandated date to achieve the pumping reductions from the Carmel River, and successful test well pumping of slant wells for the proposed Monterey Peninsula desalination project.

A separate desalination project is in development for a desalination plant in Moss Landing, at the Moss Landing Green Commercial Park. This desalination project is projected to provide 9,752 acre feet a year ("AFY") of potable water to the Monterey Peninsula and 3,652 AFY of potable water to North Monterey County. Information on this project can be reviewed at: <http://thepeopleswater.com/>

Monterey County agencies and organizations are beginning to evaluate the make-up and responsibility as a Groundwater Sustainability Agency per the State's Sustainable Groundwater Act for the Salinas Valley Aquifer. (As reported in several local area news publications.)

#### San Luis Obispo County

The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors set out a strategy for sustainable groundwater management and forming Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) at their meeting on January 13, 2015. The strategy can be reviewed here: <http://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/agenda/sanluisobispo/4221/MjAxNC4xMi4yMiBTR01BIFN0cmF0ZWd5IERvY3VtZW50IDAwNCxMl8zMV8xNCBtaCBURVNUMi5wZGY=/12/n/38572.doc>

According to the report, the strategy is to "Establish community focused GSAs based on cooperative interagency and stakeholder relationships in order to comply with Sustainable Groundwater Management Act requirements."

The report identifies the five high and medium priority groundwater basins mapped in San Luis Obispo County based on the 2014 Final Basin Prioritization by the State Department of Water Resources (DWR):

1. Paso Robles (High)
2. Santa Maria (High)
3. Los Osos (High)
4. San Luis (Edna) Valley (Medium)
5. Cuyama Valley (Medium)

The report also identifies the following "Action Steps:"

1. Focus on building GSAs with willing and eligible partner agencies, and recognize that the GSAs may have unique structures as necessary to address the different basins; establish that the Paso Robles Basin Water District will be the agency to act as the GSA if the District is formed.
2. Establish interagency agreements (acknowledging that initial agreements to develop plans may need to be amended or replaced once the details of the plans are determined).
3. Acknowledge that each Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) may be unique and will be defined by the conditions present in each groundwater basin, along with the benefits provided by that water.
4. Conduct the maximum feasible outreach to all potentially affected stakeholders.

On April 14, 2015, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors approved an ordinance restricting groundwater exports from 22 groundwater basins in the county. Projects that propose to export groundwater must receive an export permit which would only be approved if the public works director finds that moving the water would not have any adverse impacts on groundwater resources.

#### Los Osos

The Los Osos water purveyors and the County of San Luis Obispo, the "working group" pursuant to the Interlocutory Stipulated Judgment, expects court approval of their updated Basin Management Plan and the Stipulated Judgment soon. Central Coast Water Board staff, with assistance from the Groundwater Management Unit at the State Water Resources Control Board, will review the plan and report to the Central Coast Water Board at one of the next few Board meetings after the water purveyors finalize their plan. Staff will inform the Board as to the severity of the basin conditions, what actions are proposed to manage the basin and when these actions will be implemented. Additionally, staff will identify the roles or authorities of the Regional or State Water Board to intervene to compel basin management, if appropriate or necessary.

On April 2, 2015, the Los Osos Community Services District Board of Directors declared a Stage III emergency per the District's Water Shortage Contingency Plan. The latest restrictions include an allocation of 50 gallons per day per person, and added penalties up to two times the established rate for usage above the allocation, no credits for leak adjustments, and no allocations may be transferred to another property. These are in addition to existing prohibitions such as no outdoor irrigation except between dusk and dawn, no use of potable water for washing driveways and hard surfaces, no fountains, no excessive use resulting in runoff, no car-washing at residences unless using shut-off nozzle and no runoff.

#### Goleta Sanitary District (GSD)

The Executive Officer and staff met with the GSD's General Manager and Assistant General Manger on April 21 regarding expanded use of their recycled water. The GSD's wastewater

treatment plant (WWTP) has a designed treatment capacity of 10 million gallons per day (mgd). Due to conservation efforts by the community the volume of water treated has dropped from 7 to just over 5 mgd. The GSD is under contract to provide the Goleta Water District (GWD) with up to 3 mgd of recycled water, but the volume rarely exceeds 2 mgd. GSD has the capacity to recycle almost the entire 5 mgd; however, GSD's water reclamation permit only allows GSD to provide recycled water to GWD. GSD is requesting authorization from the Executive Officer to provide recycled water to additional users such as construction firms for dust control, Cal Fire for fire suppression, and tank haulers who would provide water to parts of the community not currently receiving recycled water for landscape water and other uses.

Expanded use of recycled water can substitute for the use of drinking water in non-potable uses and is consistent with the Governor's Executive Order for state agencies to expedite permit actions that will assist local communities deal with the drought. Staff committed to expedite the review of GSD's request.

At the same time, we discussed the future use of recycled water for direct groundwater augmentation. GSD expressed support and a willingness to work with GWD. GWD is making extensive use of its groundwater basins during the drought to supply potable water to its customers. Staff will begin consultation with the State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water, GWD, and GSD on this topic.

## **CONCLUSION**

Given the severity of the drought and the high volume of work in response for the State Board Division of Water Rights, Central Coast Water Board staff will continue to track drought-related activities and issues in the region and provide assistance to stakeholders and the State Water Board as needed. Additionally, Central Coast Water Board staff will take drought conditions and impacts to beneficial uses and water quality into account as we continue to conduct permitting, groundwater and spill cleanup and investigations, interagency coordination and grant-funding outreach or other business affected by the drought.